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EX-CIA AGENT SAYS FLIGHT 007 WAS SPY PLANE

The commercial jetliner shot down by the Soviets was loaded with U.S. spy equipment and purposely flew over Soviet airspace when the Russians were planning an ICBM launch, a 25-year CIA veteran said.

Ralph W. McGehee, a retired CIA agent who spent 14 years in overseas assignments, told students at Weber State College Thursday the United States government worked with the Korean government to orchestrate espionage with the use of a commercial airliner.

"The evidence is overwhelming that this was a planned event by the United States to send a commercial airliner equipped with spy equipment into the Soviet Union, thinking they would not shoot it down."

He said he does not think the Soviets realized the Korean Air Lines Boeing 747 jet was a commercial airliner and mistook it for a nearby circling RC-135 spy plane.

"I don't think the Soviets knew it was a commercial airliner," he said.

McGehee, who joined the CIA in 1952, said he is followed by the intelligence agency, which he also said taps his telephone. He said the agency is not being totally honest with the information released on the incident.

He said the day of the KAL 007 flight the Soviets planned an ICBM test launch and the airliner with 269 people aboard "wandered" directly over that area as well as over several major Soviet military installations.

In addition to the presence of the airliner and the sophisticated RC-135 spy plane, he said, an American relay satellite passed directly over the commercial airliner, both as it flew above the ICBM test site and again as it passed over the military installations.

"In 1978 the United States did a similar thing and the Soviets forced the plane to land," he said.

"With Flight 007 the United States had no intention for the plane to be shot down and thought they were getting the best of both worlds. The United States would get the information and Russia would get a black eye."

He said the intrusion of the airliner was a ploy to simulate an invasion. Military pilots during the past two decades have been ordered to penetrate Soviet airspace to test their defense radar.

He said the Soviets, unlike the United States, do not keep their radar defense operating continually. That, he said, makes it impossible for the U.S. intelligence to understand the system and build defenses to it.

"Only when the radar is activated can we monitor their system," McGehee said, adding that the RC-135 has equipment designed to do just that.

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